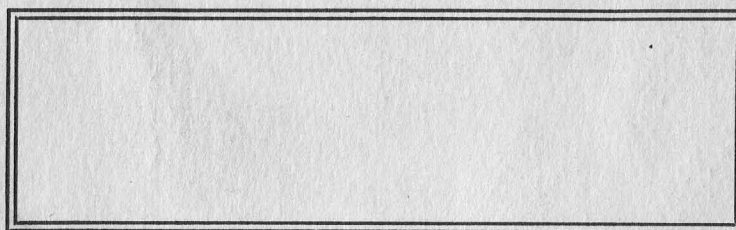


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FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT

122 East 42nd Street, New York City

Francis Bosworth, Director

RURAL PLAYS

PART I

FOR ADVANCED AMATEURS

DRAMAS
COMEDIES
TRAGEDIES

AMATEUR PLAY DEPARTMENT

GEORGE TERWILLIGER

SUPERVISOR

PLAY BUREAU PUBLICATION NO 15

SECOND EDITION

JUNE 1937

20 cents the copy

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When writing to publishers please mention "THE NATIONAL PLAY BUREAU"

INTRODUCTION

Drama tournaments, college and Little Theatre play contests are contributing much to the vivid expression of the American regional and rural drama and the scope of these activities is continually widening. The support which rural playwrights receive from community audiences, the prizes offered for the best plays and the interchange of successful plays with nearby and distant producing groups are an excellent sign that native regional dramas are improving in every way. They are near to the formula of authentic "folk dramas" which point the way toward a permanent theatre as surely as the pioneer efforts of the Carolina Playmakers under Professor Frederick H Koch at the University of North Carolina.

Since the World War a great number of American folk plays have been written and produced by community drama groups, Little Theatres and college players. This large assortment of rural play material came to the attention of the NATIONAL PLAY BUREAU during 1936; this list is the result of many months of reading and reviewing of these American folk plays.

In Part One of these recommended non-royalty rural plays we have selected the best of the tragedies, dramas and comedies read in our survey. They have been selected for characterization, sincerity and authentic locale. This first list is designed for advanced drama groups with Little Theatre, regional workshop, college, club or church experience. The two lists to follow will provide additional non-royalty plays for high school and community drama groups which produce only seasonal or occasional plays for small rural audiences.

It has been a long step from the first American "folk plays" to this present NATIONAL PLAY BUREAU list. The Carolina Playmakers coined the term "folk play" in this country. This famous American group of writers and players was organized at the University of North Carolina eighteen years ago. Professor Koch had already organized the Dakota Playmakers with their "Native Prairie Plays". The first of the Dakota "folk" plays was written

in collaboration by eighteen undergraduate students of the University of North Dakota in 1914. The term "folk play" applies to that form of drama which is earth-rooted in the lives of a struggling humanity and dramatizes emotional problems, changing conditions, conflict between generations, superstitions and the growth and development of the people.

"Alabama" by Augustus Thomas, "In Missoura", "The Witching Hour" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin" are examples of early American drama. "In Abraham's Bosom" written by Paul Green in 1927 was our first authentic folk drama of the native American negro.

We have listed the publishers of the plays on this list with the price and terms for amateur production. It is important that all groups remember that copying "parts" without permission violates the United States Copyright Act.

We would appreciate mention of this list to publishers when ordering plays, and after production we would like to know of their success and of the group interest and of audience reaction.

George Terwilliger
Supervisor

Compiled by
Pamela James

ALL THE RIVERS
by
Mary Thurman Pyle

CLASS: Drama

NO OF CHARACTERS: 5
Male: 2 Female: 3

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is a charming play of the South. The roles of Rose and her father require skilful, emotional acting. It is simple to produce if these two characters can be properly cast

SYNOPSIS:

JOHN HATHAWAY, a Tennessee farmer, is devoted to his fourteen-year-old daughter, Rose, and proud of her crude drawings. When MARY and FRANK ALLENBY, old friends visiting briefly from New York, offer to educate ROSE and develop her talent for drawing, he stubbornly refuses. Rose, he feels, would need no further education than that offered at the country school; when she fulfilled her destiny, married and had children she would have no use for her drawings. Vainly Mary and Frank argue that Rose is entitled to an opportunity to develop her unusual talent. MATTIE HATHAWAY tries to persuade John that he should not refuse Rose the opportunity the Allenbys offer. Weeping bitterly Rose begs her father to let her go away to study and be able to paint as she feels she can. John is adamant until Rose angrily destroys her drawings, declaring she will never make another. Her emotional outburst convinces John of the depth of her desire and he reluctantly gives his consent. Rose and Mattie happily make plans to join the Allenbys in New York for the next school term

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The Tennessee foothills. The present

SETS: 1 - The comfortable, plainly furnished back porch of the Hathaway farmhouse

COSTUMES: Printed silk dress for Mattie; summer wash dress for Rose; worn, second-best suit for John; modern clothes for Mary and Frank

AGE OF GROUP: Adult and one child

SOURCE: Row, Peterson and Company
Evanston, Illinois
Copyright 1936

50 cents for pamphlet copy. \$3.00 for THE THIRD YEARBOOK OF
SHORT PLAYS

25 new non-royalty plays, selected and edited by Lee Owen Snook
Amateurs granted the rights of production with the purchase of
5 pamphlet copies of the play

COMPENSATION
by
Anne Ferring

CLASS: Drama

NO OF CHARACTERS: 6
Male: 2 Female: 2
Children: 1 boy, 1 girl

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is splendid drama which should appeal to all groups of amateurs.
The characters are humanly drawn and are easy to act

SYNOPSIS:

LUCILE looks forward with mixed emotions to the arrival of her girlhood friend, Emmy Stratton. Emmy's success as a concert singer reminds Lucile of her own career as a pianist which she had abandoned to marry a struggling farmer. Lucile dusts the shabby living room and wonders if they will ever be able to afford a piano; hail, frost and drouth through the years have reduced the farm's profits and left no margin beyond enough for bare necessities. Lucile cautions BETTY, her ten-year-old daughter, to be careful of her clean frock and warns thirteen-year-old JIMMIE to remember his manners when Aunt Emmy arrives. MARK, Lucile's husband, does not share her enthusiasm for the visit from Emmy. Remembering Lucile's ambition he is afraid Emmy's success will remind her too sharply of what she might have accomplished had she not married him. Mark calls Lucile's attention to the fine quality of the vegetables he has just brought in from the garden and outlines his new plan for planting sugar beets. Lucile advises him to investigate the market before he experiments with sugar beets. Remembering his past mistakes, Mark's temper flares up and he bitterly accuses her of lack of faith in him. EMMY arrives by taxi for her brief visit between trains. Lucile is disturbed by her quarrel with Mark and under Emmy's affectionate questioning admits their struggle for a bare existence. Emmy suggests that Lucile resume her career and generously offers to lend her money for the children's schooling and her own living expenses until she can re-establish herself. Lucile informs Mark that she is going to the city and his sarcastic assent is interrupted by a shrill scream from Betty. Mark rushes from the room; from the window Lucile and Emmy watch him rescue Betty from the wagon of a runaway team of horses. Lucile's terror for the safety of her husband makes her realise how deeply she loves him. Mark returns with the frightened but unhurt child and Lucile tells Emmy that she cannot leave him. Emmy understands that Mark, Betty and Jimmie more than compensate Lucile for her lost career. Emmy leaves to catch her train, promising to send Lucile a piano.

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The Midwest. The present

SETS: 1 - A shabby but comfortable living room of a farmhouse

COSTUMES: Modern traveling suit for Emmy; dark silk dress with an apron for Lucile; fresh gingham for Betty; khaki playsuit for Jimmie; overalls for Mark; shabby suit for taxi-driver

AGE OF GROUP: Adult and two children

SOURCE: The Dramatic Publishing Company
59 East Van Buren Street
Chicago, Illinois
Copyright 1935
75 cents the copy
In NEW YORK RURAL PLAYS, 6 plays in the book
Amateurs granted the rights of production with the purchase
of six copies of the book

THE FRONT DOOR
by
Barbara Busse

CLASS: Drama

NO OF CHARACTERS: 5
Male: 2 Female: 3

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This play maintains a fine and moving simplicity. The character's are authentic and sympathetically drawn. Only advanced amateur or semi-professional groups should attempt production as it requires careful direction and skilful acting

SYNOPSIS:

Laura Lewis is dead. Her body lies in the parlor and her two best friends and nearest neighbors, MINNIE TOBIAS and EMMA JONES, take charge of her home. Preparing luncheon in the big old-fashioned kitchen they talk affectionately of Laura; Laura had been patient and self-sacrificing, she had never demanded the modern conveniences of running water and electricity which her husband could well afford. HENRY, Laura's husband, interrupts them as he brings in a bucket of water. He is awkward in his Sunday suit and inarticulate in his grief. He answers briefly as they try to sympathize with him. The undertaker telephones to ask about the funeral arrangements and Henry hurriedly leaves the room. Over the telephone Laura's friends conspire with the undertaker to fulfill her last wish, to have the "front door" finished so that she could be carried through it to her grave. When the house was built fifteen years ago Henry had dismissed the carpenters because he thought he was being overcharged. The front door was unfinished and he had boarded it up. The UNDERTAKER arrives, measures the kitchen door and tells Henry that it is too narrow to permit the coffin to be carried out. Henry gruffly refuses to finish the front door because of the expense it involves. MOLLIE, his daughter, flares up at him in momentary hate and during her fierce attack he realises how his severity and thoughtlessness must have wounded his wife, whom he had really loved deeply. He gives orders to the undertaker to have the front door finished and tenderly tries to comfort Mollie

PERIOD AND LOCALE: Iowa. Noon - a day in the summer

SETS: 1 - An old-fashioned, cheerful kitchen

COSTUMES: Crisp cotton housedresses for Minnie and Emma; black frock for Mollie; Sunday best for Henry; worn business suit for the undertaker

AGE OF GROUP: Adult and one adolescent

SOURCE: Christian College
Columbia, Missouri
Copyright 1934
75 cents the copy

In CHRISTIAN COLLEGE PRIZE PLAYS, 5 plays edited by Mary Paxton Keeley. "The Front Door" was awarded the gold trophy cup in the 1934 Midwest Folk Playwriting Contest, Honorable Mention in the 1934 Dramatic Arts Contest, and First Prize in the Phi Theta Kappa Contest

A LIGHT ON THE CROSSROADS

by

C Elta Van Norman

CLASS: Drama

NO OF CHARACTERS: 5

Male: 2 Female: 3

PLAY LENGTH:

1 act - 30 minutes

This is an excellent drama of sacrifice. The characters are well drawn but not difficult to portray. High school, college and community groups will find it simple to produce and good entertainment

SYNOPSIS:

JUDITH has spent her life in service to others. The ever-burning light in the window of her home on the crossroads has long been a symbol of her kindly spirit. When she is sixty years old she has an opportunity to sell her home. MARTHA, her old friend and neighbor tries to dissuade her from leaving her friends, but Judith is determined to fulfill her life-long desire to live in the city, where she can hear music, meet interesting people and see lights instead of woods and bare fields. MARGARET, Judith's niece, returns unexpectedly from the city. Judith tells her that she is selling her home. Martha sees the disappointment in Margaret's face but she does not know that Margaret has just realized that she had hurried home as though to a haven of refuge. Margaret had gone to the city in search of a career and found that she had over-rated both her talent and her ambition. Depressed by her failure she had promised to wed Burton, who was insisting on an early marriage. TONY, an Italian laborer, comes to ask Judith to hurry to the bedside of his daughter, Carlotta, who is dying. As Judith leaves, BURTON, who has been waiting in his car for Margaret, comes in to shorten her visit. Crude and unsympathetic, he disparages the shabby furniture and promises to buy Margaret a much better home when they are married. Martha upon meeting Burton shrewdly guesses the situation and when Judith returns informs her of Margaret's unhappy engagement. Without hesitating Judith sacrifices her plans to live her life for herself. Calling Margaret she tells her that she is not going to sell her home, that Carlotta died and she must remain to take care of the motherless baby. Joyously Margaret sends Martha to tell Burton that she is not going to marry him

LOCALE AND PERIOD: Anywhere in the country. The present

SETS: 1 - An old-fashioned living room

COSTUMES: Dark cotton dresses for Judith and Martha; laborer's clothes for Tony; modern clothes for Margaret and Burton

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: The Dramatic Publishing Company

59 East Van Buren Street

Chicago, Illinois

75 cents the copy

In NEW YORK RURAL PLAYS, 6 prize plays selected by

Alice Gerstenberg, Paul Green and members of the Department of Rural Social Organization at Cornell College

Amateur rights of production granted with the purchase of six copies of the book

THE RIVER RAT
by
Mary Paxton Keeley

CLASS: Drama

NO OF CHARACTERS: 3
Male: 2 Female: 1

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is a timely drama in view of the recent floods through the Midwest and South. The theme of the play is interesting and well presented. Advanced amateurs and semi-professional groups will appreciate the subtle mood of The River Rat. The set can be suggested if facilities for staging are limited, as the lines carry the atmosphere

SYNOPSIS:

SARAH watches the turbulent waters of the Missouri River come closer and closer to the picket fence of her home. Standing in the garden she sees their land swallowed in the swift current racing to the sea. FRANK, her husband, calmly mends his fishing nets and seems unmindful of the danger of the raging river. Sarah tells him they must leave as the village is under water and the wagon is ready with the last load of their furniture. Frank refuses to leave the river which has cared for him so generously throughout his life; the river has enriched his land, watered his livestock and provided food when all else failed. Sarah cannot understand Frank's devotion to the river; to her it is a frightful monster forever threatening to destroy her as it did the rats that nested in its banks. She sees the muddy waters creep over the family burying ground and her favorite cherry tree uprooted and carried away in the swirling waters. Crying out in her terror she rushes into the house for her bonnet and cloak. SAM, the nearest neighbor, comes to warn Frank that the roads are rapidly becoming impassable. Frank stubbornly refuses to desert the river. The river has always been his friend and he will not desert her because she is angry. Sam tries to persuade Frank that he owes it to Sarah to take her to safety. Frank asks Sam to drive the team for Sarah and shows him a cottonwood dugout that he has built; when the river takes his home he will row to the bewitched island which an Indian sweetheart had shown him long ago. The river never disturbed the little island but kept it safe, a haven and a graveyard for those who loved and trusted the Spirit of the River. Sarah makes one last plea for Frank to come with her; he must choose between her and the river. Frank chooses the river. Weeping bitterly Sarah kisses him and leaves with Sam. Frank watches her as she disappears; he turns to the river, looking wistfully over the raging waters toward the island

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The bank of the Missouri River near the Iowa line.
The lost town of Sonora, just after the Civil War

SETS: 1 - The front yard of a farm on the river

COSTUMES: Farm clothes of the period

AGE OF GROUP: Adult

SOURCE: Christian College
Columbia, Missouri
25 cents for mimeographed copy

SPRING STORM
by
Frank H Ordway

CLASS: Drama

NO OF CHARACTERS: 5
Male: 3 Female: 2

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is a strong drama of pioneers in the early Nineteenth Century. Advanced amateurs and semi-professional groups will find it splendid entertainment and the varied characters excellent for dramatic training. It was first produced by the author, who played the role of Barlow

SYNOPSIS:

BARLOW bars the door of the closet which holds his winter's catch of furs. LYDIA, his wife, cautions extra care, for the cat's tail has pointed north all day and she is apprehensive of danger. Mr Vandermeter, who comes each spring to buy the furs is overdue and Lydia fears robbers may take advantage of the storm to steal them. Barlow laughs at her fears but a loud knock on the door startles him. He will not open until assured that it is his friend, Vandermeter. TWO ROUGH MEN enter and he orders them to leave. The leader, Von Kleef, tells Barlow he has come to buy the furs for Vandermeter. Lydia is suspicious and warns her husband. When Von Kleef exhibits a large roll of bills Barlow opens the closet door. Lydia reluctantly brings a jug of whiskey and Von Kleef and his companion, Joe, drink heartily. A knock on the door startles them and when they open it a YOUNG WOMAN enters hastily. She begs for shelter, explaining that her coach has broken down on the rough road. The quality of her gown and cloak makes Lydia suspicious and she refuses to permit her to remain. Von Kleef's eyes gleam at the young woman's beauty and he orders Lydia to let her be. Joe warns Von Kleef that women are dangerous and urges him to let her go. Barlow and Lydia realize that their visitors are robbers and he reaches for his gun. Von Kleef covers them with his pistol and demands the furs, boasting that he has murdered Vandermeter and will not hesitate to kill Barlow and Lydia. He gives the Young Woman her choice of going away with him or being killed with the Barlows. She chooses to go with him and offers to help steal the furs. Von Kleef gives her his pistol and goes with Joe into the closet. The Young Woman slams the door and bars it. While Barlow stands guard, she explains that Von Kleef is a notorious outlaw. He has murdered her father, Vandermeter, and she has sworn to bring him to justice. The Sheriff has come with her on Von Kleef's trail and is waiting at the inn nearby for word from her. Lydia sees that the cat's tail no longer points north, and is assured that all danger is past

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The Mohawk Valley. Spring, 1800

SETS: 1 - The primitively furnished living room of the Barlow cabin

COSTUMES: Faded calico for Lydia; fashionable gown and cloak of the period for the Young Woman; rough hunting clothes for Barlow, Von Kleef and Joe

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: Walter H Baker Company
178 Tremont Street
Boston, Mass
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Amateur rights of production granted with the purchase of 5
copies of the book

WOMEN IN THE HOUSE
by
Aletrice Rutherford

CLASS: Drama

NO OF CHARACTERS: 4
Female: 4

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is a strong drama for an all-women cast. It is well written and amateurs of all groups will find the varied characters splendid for dramatic training

SYNOPSIS:

SARA HANCOCK dominates the three generations of women living under her roof as she has all of her family through most of the ninety-seven years of her life. Her tyranny keeps her great-granddaughter ELIZABETH in a state of bitter rebellion. But for the sympathetic understanding of her grandmother, SUSAN, Elizabeth would have left home when she graduated from college and gone to work in the local library. MARTHA, Elizabeth's mother, is intensely jealous of the affection and confidence Elizabeth gives Susan; her tearful reproaches and nagging adds to the turmoil of their lives. The young lawyer who is in love with Elizabeth telephones during one of their bitter quarrels. When Elizabeth finishes talking to him, Martha and Sara bombard her with prying questions which she refuses to answer. Angry at her refusal Sara orders Elizabeth to bed without dinner to punish her. Despairing of ever living happily with Martha and Sara or of ever being accorded her rights as an individual, Elizabeth tells Susan that she has promised her fiance to elope with him. Susan kisses Elizabeth and sends her to meet her fiance

LOCALE AND PERIOD: A small town in Missouri. The present

SETS: 1 - An old-fashioned living room

COSTUMES: Old-fashioned for Sara, Susan and Martha; modern for Elizabeth

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: Christian College
Columbia, Missouri
Copyright 1934

75 cents the copy

In CHRISTIAN COLLEGE PRIZE PLAYS, 6 plays edited by Mary Paxton Keeley

No royalty is charged for amateur production, but permission must be obtained from Christian College

ALSACE IN MISSOURI

by
Allean Lemmon
Evelyn Milligan
Betty Young
Ruthanez Felker
Bland Kirk
Virginia Wilbur

DRAMA: Comedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 6
Male: 1 Female: 5
1 boy, 1 girl

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act 30 minutes

This is a human interest play of great charm. The roles of the grandmother and the children afford an opportunity for skilful characterization which advanced amateur and semi-professional groups will appreciate. It was written by the six authors in the classroom and was awarded Honorable Mention by the Dramatic Arts Contests in 1933 and produced at Christian College in April, 1934

SYNOPSIS:

GRANDMOTHER HODGE has come from her farm in Kansas to take charge of her twin grandchildren, Cynthia and Ralph, whose parents drowned while crossing to their island home during a sudden rise of the river. Shortly afterward, without explanation, she took the children from school and taught them readin', writin' and the Scriptures herself, supplementing their education with picturesque stories of early frontier days. Their TEACHER comes to persuade Grandmother Hodge to return the children to school. She finds CYNTHIA and RALPH peeling potatoes and enacting a dramatic incident of family history in which their great-grandfather is brutally killed by Missouri "bushwhackers". The county superintendent of schools, MRS FLEMING, arrives to warn GRANDMOTHER HODGE that school attendance is compulsory and unless the children return to school the sheriff will use his authority. Grandmother Hodge swears that no Missouri sheriff will touch her grandchildren. The teacher explains that the Missouri sheriff will have no authority since the school is in Nebraska. Grandmother Hodge is still doubtful and Mrs Fleming tells her the little island is called "Alsace in Missouri" because the vagaries of the Missouri River alternately shift it closer to the Missouri and Nebraska shore lines, similar to the province of Alsace-Lorraine between France and Germany. Grandmother Hodge does not understand this reference, but assured that the school is not in Missouri she readily consents to the children returning to school

LOCALE AND PERIOD: An island in the Missouri River between Missouri and Nebraska, Atchinson County. The present

SETS: 1 - Simply furnished farmhouse kitchen

COSTUMES: Old-fashioned for Grandmother Hodge, Cynthia and Ralph; modern for the teacher, Mrs Fleming and the woman neighbor

AGE OF GROUP: Adult and two children

SOURCE: Christian College
Columbia, Missouri
Copyright 1934
75 cents the copy
In CHRISTIAN COLLEGE PRIZE PLAYS, 5 plays, edited by
Mary Paxton Keeley. "The Hero", "Moon Bums" and "The Front Door"

THE CATALOGUE

by

T M Morrow

CLASS: Comedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 5

Male: 3 Female: 2

PLAY LENGTH:

1 act 30 minutes

This is an amusing comedy and splendid entertainment. The characters are human and authentic. Amateurs of all groups will appreciate this excellent comedy, which is simple to produce

SYNOPSIS:

The new Spring mail-order catalogue arrives at the Martin farm. MRS MARTIN and her daughter MYRTLE seize it eagerly to look at the new clothes fashions. MR MARTIN complains goodnaturedly about the money the catalogue will cost him. A full page illustration of a bride's trousseau, showing a gown with flowing veil and orange blossoms, all for a reasonable price, interests Mrs Martin. Myrtle would make a lovely bride IF her bashful beau, Joe, ever proposed. Mr Martin volunteers to talk to Joe about his intentions but Myrtle insists indignantly that she can manage her own affairs. Cautioning her father not to speak to Joe, Myrtle goes to her room to dress for Joe's call. When JOE arrives shortly afterward, Mr Martin greets him cordially and makes the new catalogue the topic of conversation; he turns the pages casually from wire fences and rat traps to the illustration of the bride. The lovely bride definitely interests Joe. Mr Martin tactfully reminisces about his own wedding and the advantages of early marriages. Myrtle returns; Mr Martin reluctantly but with twinkling eyes allows Mrs Martin to inveigle him out of the room. Myrtle makes the new catalogue the topic of conversation; she turns the pages casually from sets of furniture and the illustration of the bride to the page devoted to engagement rings. The catalogue helps Joe to overcome his bashfulness and he shyly proposes. Mr Martin returns and Joe boldly informs him that he is engaged to Myrtle

LOCALE AND PERIOD: Anywhere in the country. The present

SETS: 1 - The comfortably furnished living room of the Martin farmhouse

COSTUMES: House dress for Mrs Martin; overalls for Mr Martin; pretty print frock and bright smock for Myrtle; corduroy pants and pullover sweater for Myrtle's adolescent brother; Sunday best for Joe

AGE OF GROUP: Adult and one adolescent

SOURCE: The Dramatic Publishing Company

59 East Van Buren Street

Chicago, Illinois

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THE COMBING JACKET

by

Mae Howley Barry

CLASS: Comedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 6

Female: 6

PLAY LENGTH:

1 act - 30 minutes

This is a delightful comedy of great charm for an all-women cast. The situations are humorous and the characters human. It is splendid entertainment and simple to stage and act

SYNOPSIS:

AGGIE and JENNIE industriously arrange their booths for the charity bazaar. Aggie displays the pretty aprons, pillow tops and lamp shades to the best advantage. She determines to again win the yearly prize for selling everything in her booth and making the most money. Jennie has no hope of winning the prize, for cans of corn, tomatoes and hash never bring more than current prices. AMANDA arrives with a large box of donations she has collected for her "white elephant" booth. She delivers to Aggie a combing jacket from Tillie Hockenberry. Tearful and indignant Aggie refuses to accept it. Every year Tillie made a combing jacket for the church bazaar in the firm belief that it was a beautiful and useful garment. Aggie always used her best sales ability to dispose of it and last year had almost lost the prize when the jacket had not sold until the last moment. Amanda refuses to take it for her booth and to stop their argument Jennie agrees to display it with the canned goods. The MINISTER'S WIFE comes in before the sale with her friend from Boston, MRS CHASEBORN. Aggie offers Mrs Chaseborn everything in her booth but she sees the combing jacket and promptly buys it, giving Jennie a check for fifty dollars. Aggie is stunned. Mrs Chaseborn explains that the combing jacket has a sentimental value to her for she was sewing on one like it when she was a young girl; her industry had impressed her favorite beau and he had proposed. Her husband had teased her all their married life about the unfinished combing jacket and now she can show him a completed one. The fifty dollar check makes it certain that Jennie will win the prize. Tillie comes in to see the booths and is pleased and proud that her jacket sold for so much money. Aggie's tears puzzle Tillie; she, not understanding Amanda's cryptic explanation, hurries home to bring Aggie another combing jacket

LOCALE AND PERIOD: Any small town. The present

SETS: 1 - Three booths in the corner of the church basement

COSTUMES: Homely second-best dresses for Aggie, Jennie and Amanda; old-fashioned for Tillie; exquisite modern street clothes for Mrs Chaseborn and modern street suit for the minister's wife

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: The Dramatic Publishing Company

59 East Van Buren Street

Chicago, Illinois

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HOME TIES
by
Augusta Stacy

CLASS: Comedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 5
Male: 3 Female: 2

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 25 minutes

This is an interesting comedy played over a grim tragedy. It is well written and cleverly constructed. It requires careful direction and skilful acting; only advanced amateurs should attempt production

SYNOPSIS:

AGNES KELTON proudly surveys her house and garden. It is a shack and not much of a garden but she has just received full title to it, having staked her claim to the land two years before, built and cared for it until it became her own. JED HASTINGS, her nearest neighbor, comes to congratulate her and again asks her to marry him. Agnes refuses. She is fond of him but she has bought her freedom too dearly to give it up. She tells him of the struggle she had before she had decided to leave her worthless family and make a home for herself. Her father and brother were race-track gamblers and bet on horses with the money she earned teaching school, her mother was a drunkard and a thief and had tried to make one of her. Jed understands and leaves sadly. Agnes looks up to see her brother entering her yard. She orders him to leave, bitterly reproaching him for worthlessness. He refuses to go and informs her that her father and mother are on their way from the depot. Her parents arrive and Agnes groans and covers her face. In two years she has forgotten her mother's frowsy clothes and blotched face and her father's weazened, ratlike features. Her parents cheerfully berate her for her long silence and for making a home for them so far away from civilization. They settle themselves comfortably on the porch and demand food. Dejected and crushed, Agnes serves them. She realizes that they will never leave and that they are too pathetic and battered for her to ruthlessly send them away. Jed returns and confesses that he had told an inquiring reporter about the only "lady homesteader" in the district, and unwittingly been the cause of her family tracing her. He offers to give her his home for her family, but Agnes admits that she would rather share it with him as his wife

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The Nebraska prairie. The present

SETS: 1 - The front porch and small yard of Agnes Kelton's homestead

COSTUMES: Cotton print dresses for Agnes; overalls for Jed; dilapidated jockey clothes for Agnes' brother; frowsy clothes for Mrs Kelton; battered, wrinkled "race-track" suit for Mr Kelton

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: Walter H Baker Company
178 Tremont Street
Boston, Mass
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In COUNTRY LIFE PLAYS, 8 one-act plays
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IN DOUBT ABOUT DAISY

by

Germaine Haney

CLASS: Comedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 6

Male: 3 Female: 3

PLAY LENGTH:

1 act - 30 minutes

This is a merry comedy which will appeal to all groups of amateurs. Miss Sergel of The Dramatic Publishing Company wrote us that they had published it for the fun in it, and it was so warmly received that one group was forced to play it twelve times in one county

SYNOPSIS:

MOTHER TURNER is determined to have a vacation from the farm. FATHER TURNER thinks they shouldn't leave home when their son and daughter, Mac and Honor, are coming from the city to spend their two weeks vacation on the farm; besides, one of his horses isn't well and his favorite cow, old Daisy, has contracted tuberculosis and has to be killed. Mother is so adamant. Honor and Mac can look after the stock and the farm, and Herb Kempton, their young neighbor, has agreed to shoot Daisy. HONOR and MAC arrive with KATHERINE BERRY, one of their city friends who is to spend her vacation with them. Honor is outraged at her parents' desertion. She is embarrassed to tell Katherine that her parents have taken this opportunity to go on a vacation. Honor remembers her father's parting reminder to Herb to look after Daisy. Improvising an excuse to explain her parents hurried departure, Honor explains to Katherine that they have gone to an Aunt Daisy who is dying of tuberculosis. Katherine is sympathetic and cheerfully offers her services for cooking. Mac, embarrassed at his parents' hurried departure, tells Katherine that they have gone to the village to consult a physician about his father's heart. Katherine is confused by the two stories and she thinks Herb is a heartless brute when she hears him refer to Daisy as an old cow who has served her usefulness and should be shot. A few hours on the farm makes Mac realize that he does not actually like the city. He decides to remain on the farm and Katherine promises to marry him. Herb persuades Honor to renew their romance which started when they were in High School, and she promises to marry him. Mother Turner has an attack of conscience for deserting Honor and Mac when they have a guest and she and Father return. Mother's apologies to Katherine explain Mac's excuse, and Father's inquiries about his old cow clears up the "doubt about Daisy" Honor and Mac inform their parents of their engagements to Katherine and Herb. With everyone happy, Father cheerfully takes Mother on her vacation

LOCALE AND PERIOD: Anywhere in the country. The present

SETS: 1 - The comfortably furnished dining room of the Turner farmhouse

COSTUMES: Old-fashioned best black dress for Mother Turner; Sunday best for Father; modern traveling clothes for Honor, Mac and Katherine, who later change to crisp cotton prints and overalls. Herb wears summer flannels

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: The Dramatic Publishing Company

59 East Van Buren Street

Chicago, Illinois

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Amateurs granted the rights of production with the purchase of six copies of the book

THE FOURTH GENERATION
by
Peter G Meek

CLASS: Tragedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 4
Male: 3 Female: 1

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This poignant tragedy offers splendid opportunities for experienced amateurs. It was selected and edited for the Thelphia Series of Prize Winning Plays by Arthur C Gloatingh of the Pennsylvania State College

SYNOPSIS:

CHARLES JEROME sits brooding before the fire in the gloomy drawing room of the old house which has sheltered four generations of his family. Only he and his sister, Marguerite, are left to carry on the traditions of the proud Jeromes. Charles bitterly resents Marguerite's approaching marriage and swears he will prevent it. MARGUERITE joins him and he makes one last appeal to her to remain with him on their old plantation. Marguerite refuses and tries to make him understand that the faded glory and outworn traditions of her family are not as important as her happiness in marrying the man she loves. They hear a motor approaching and Charles begs Marguerite to let him speak alone to Dick Allison, her fiance. Marguerite greets DICK happily and leaves him with her brother. Dick good-naturedly rebukes Charles for neglecting to build a protecting fence along the road by the bayou, for the turn by the gate is dangerous in wet weather and a skid or miss-step would throw a car or person into the muddy stream. Charles admits his negligence and the danger of the turn, which is known as "Angeline's Leap" because his great-aunt Angeline, when her horse had stumbled there, had been thrown into the swirling waters and her body carried away by the heavy undertow. Changing the subject, Charles warns Dick that he must not marry Marguerite because of her hereditary insanity. Dick refuses to believe that the girl has any trace of the dread heritage. Greatly distressed he leaves for New Orleans to bring an alienist to disprove Charles allegation. Charles tells Marguerite why he has sent Dick away. Bewildered, Marguerite protests that she is sane; she hears Dick's motor start and quickly runs to stop him. Charles realizes that for all his lies he has lost his sister, who now will never return to him. Frantic knocks on the window rouse him from his bitter reverie; looking up he sees GABRIEL, the old French servant who has been dumb since birth, eloquently motioning and pointing toward the bayou. Charles understands that Marguerite, running after Dick's car, had slipped on the wet road and fallen into the swirling waters of "Angeline's Leap"

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The bayou country of Louisiana. The present

SETS: 1 - The gloomy drawing room of an old plantation

COSTUMES: Modern

AGE OF GROUP: Adult

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THE HERO
by
Alleean Lemmon

CLASS: Tragedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 7
Male: 5 Female: 2

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 35 minutes

This is a strong, grim tragedy. It is well-written and dramatically constructed. The characterizations are splendid but will require skilful acting to make them seem true. Only advanced amateurs or semi-professional groups should attempt production

SYNOPSIS:

The red glow lighting the kitchen warns STELLA MARTIN that the raging forest fire is rapidly approaching her home. Trembling with excitement she hurries in and out of the kitchen assembling the bare necessities which can be taken in a rowboat across the lake. EMMY, Stella's sister-in-law, comes with extra suitcases and the latest news of the fire. Stella goes down into the cellar and is imprisoned there by the door, which sticks fast. Emmy forces it open and severely criticizes her brother, Bert, for his negligence in repairing it. Stella loyally defends her husband but Emmy continues her tirade against him for being a lazy, shiftless, drunken coward. Stella reminds Emmy that Bert is fighting the fire, and as she speaks BERT comes in, smoke-grimed and limping. Emmy sniffs contemptuously and leaves. Stella reproaches Bert for leaving the fire and begs him to hurry back. Bert swallows half of a bottle of whiskey and orders her to finish packing so they can get to the boats first. TWO NEIGHBORS stop briefly and Stella shames Bert into going back with them to the fire line. Stella resumes packing. A SMALL BOY runs in breathlessly with the news that Bert has been killed by the falling roof of a burning house. Stella remembers the gay, care-free Bert she had married twelve years before, and tears come swiftly to her eyes. She is startled by Bert who reels drunkenly into the room, demanding more whiskey. He refuses to endanger his life by fighting the fire. Stella, with grim face, reminds him that the whiskey is in the cellar. He lurches down the stairs, disregarding Stella's bitter, hysterical reproaches for his cowardice. She slams the cellar door, and ignores the frantic cries of her husband as he pounds against it. Stella closes the suitcases and puts on her coat. Bert's cries have ceased when Emmy and the neighbors come to carry the suitcases to the boats. Stella's eyes are dry as they praise Bert for dying a hero

LOCALE AND PERIOD: Wisconsin. The present

SETS: 1 - A plainly furnished kitchen of a flimsy wooden house

COSTUMES: Plain, faded housedresses for Stella and Emmy; rough work clothes, smoke-grimed and torn, for the men

AGE OF GROUP: Adult

SOURCE: Christian College
Columbia, Missouri
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IT TOOK A WOMAN
by
Laura Miller

CLASS: Tragedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 6
Male: 5 Female: 1

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is an especially fine play for advanced amateurs or semi-professional groups. It is grim story, and dramatic, and has an unusual feature; there is no sympathy for the murdered woman. It requires skilful direction and acting and should only be attempted by advanced players

SYNOPSIS:

ARVILLA CAMERON looks about the spotless kitchen as though it somehow holds the solution of Wanda Turnidge's strange disappearance. Arvilla knows her friend's home as well as she knows her own. She admires the crisp curtains, the gleaming pots and the shining porcelain sink; everything looks as Wanda always kept it, but Arvilla senses an elusive difference she cannot define. The Sheriff's posse is scouring the hills, searching for the missing woman. SHADE TURNIDGE had testified that his wife had finished ironing the day before, and taking advantage of the first thaw of the winter, left to visit their nearest neighbors, the Camerons. She had not been seen since. Arvilla thought of a quarrel she had once heard between Wanda and Shade in which he maintained that a man could do a woman's work with half the worry and trouble. NEIL CAMERON, Arvilla's husband, reminds his wife that he never shared her admiration for Wanda's meticulous housekeeping for it prevented Shade from enjoying him home. Arvilla examines everything again; the clothes do not smell freshly ironed, muddy footprints of Shade's dog are on the floor and a half-scrubbed grease spot is under the rug by the fireplace. Wanda had never permitted Shade's dog to come into the house and Arvilla tries to reconcile herself to these unusual occurrences. The SHERIFF returns, and since they have found no clue, disbands the posse until morning. A half-smile on Shade's face crystallizes Arvilla's suspicions; it was the same smile he had when he told Wanda that a man could do a woman's work with half the worry and work. Her voice shrill with fury she accuses Shade of murdering his wife during the months they were snowed in and trying to make it appear as though she had only just now disappeared. Shade admits murdering Wanda, for Arvilla's knowledge of his wife's meticulous housekeeping has betrayed him. One night he had brought his dog in out of the bitter cold; Wanda, furious with anger at Shade, had poured scalding water upon the dog. Infuriated at her cruelty Shade had shot her. Bitterly denouncing Arvilla for meddling, Shade leaves with the Sheriff

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The Coast Hills of Oregon. The present

SETS: 1 - A meticulously clean kitchen with painted chairs, crisp curtains and shining pots and pans

COSTUMES: Faded cotton housedress for Arvilla; rough work clothes and boots for the men

AGE OF GROUP: Adult

SOURCE: Row, Peterson and Company
Evanston, Illinois
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THE JOKE-ATIVE MAN
by
Laura Miller

CLASS: Tragedy
NO OF CHARACTERS: 7
Male: 5 Female: 2

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is a carefully planned, well-written tragedy. The author has a fine ear and sharp eye for local color and the climax is intensely dramatic. Advanced amateurs and semi-professional groups will find this play splendid entertainment and good for dramatic training

SYNOPSIS:

SHERIFF ANDERS puzzles over the mysterious murder of Joel Binns. Joel had been shot at the wheel of his Ford within a mile of his home when returning from the village. Holding the inquest at the home of the dead man, the Sheriff questions two neighbor farmers, JOHN TOMPKINS and BRADLEY. Both men deny feuds or unfriendly relations with their former neighbor. They maintain that Joel was one of the best liked men in their community; his exceptional good nature and proclivity for practical jokes had earned him the nickname of "joke-ative man". Tompkins advances the theory that hi-jackers might have killed Joel for his prune liquor. Sheriff Anders won't accept the hi-jacking theory and questions the widow, SERENA BINNS. Serena tries to throw suspicion upon Tompkins but the Sheriff is inclined to believe that Serena's son, Hank Evers, had more reason to kill Joel. HANK answers all questions frankly and admits he had often quarrelled with his step-father; Hank admired Joel for his good nature but he resented his lack of responsibility toward his mother and the heavy tasks of the farm. When the Sheriff arrests Hank and charges him with the murder Serena confesses to killing her husband. Sheriff Anders questions her ability to shoot, but Tompkins and Bradley confirm Serena's claim that she is quick and accurate with a gun. Serena explains her motive for killing her husband: she had inherited the farm free of debt from her father and her first husband had mortgaged it. After his death she had married Joel, who had never helped with the work or tried to save money. She had worked hard, scrimped and saved until she had accumulated enough money to pay the mortgage and given it to Joel to make payment. The afternoon of the murder she had seen buzzards menacing her brood of turkeys and had hurried out with her rifle to protect them. She met Joel returning from the village and stopped to talk to him. He displayed a handsome radio, which he told her he had bought with the mortgage money. As he drove away Serena thought of the toil the money had cost her and the worry she had about the debt on her home. Furious, she lifted her rifle, took aim and fired. Hank tells his mother that Joel had paid the mortgage, that he bought the radio with his prune liquor money. Joel had only been joking

LOCALE AND PERIOD: Foothills of the Oregon Coast Range. The present

SETS: 1 - The plainly furnished living room of the Binns farmhouse

COSTUMES: Calico housedresses for Serena and the neighbor; rough work clothes for Hank, Tompkins and Bradley; business suit for the coroner; boots and riding breeches for the sheriff

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: Row, Peterson and Company
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THE OLD SETTLER'S PICNIC
by
S E Jennings

CLASS: Tragedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 6
Male: 3 Female: 3

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 2 scenes +
30 minutes

This is an especially fine play. College and semi-professional groups will find it interesting to produce. The characters are sympathetically drawn and offer splendid opportunities for dramatic training

SYNOPSIS:

LUCY MILES has been postponing her marriage to Tom, her girlhood sweetheart for twenty years, for she promised her dying mother to take care of her father as long as he needed her. Dutiful and uncomplaining Lucy assumed the heavy household tasks of the farm. The years passed and with them her youth and beauty. Henry Miles had no compunction in accepting his daughter's sacrifice in remaining at home. At seventy-nine Henry is as vain, selfish and domineering as he has been all his life. On a hot morning early in June, JIM, a neighboring farmer, comes to take HENRY to the event of the year, the Old Settler's Picnic. Henry leaves gaily, proud of the elaborate luncheon Lucy has prepared, vain in his white linen suit and feeling as youthful as young Jim. Lucy looks forward to a quiet day in which to finish the week's ironing and mending without interruption by demands from her father. TOM comes to ask her again to go with him to the picnic. He pleads with her to marry him; he loves her dearly and needs her as his wife to help with his farm. Torturing each other they go over the old argument, Tom begging for the fulfillment of their love and Lucy obstinately adhering to her promise to take care of her father. Tom warns her that he will not wait forever and Lucy, torn with the conflict between love and duty, tells him to marry another girl. She escapes his outstretched arms and hurries from the room. Disappointed and defeated Tom angrily leaves for the picnic alone. Late that afternoon LIZZIE SPEIGHT, Lucy's old friend and neighbor, comes to tell Lucy that Tom has married Mary Hicks at the picnic. Lucy tries to adjust herself to the thought of Tom married to someone else. Jim returns alone from the picnic and Lucy questions him anxiously about her father. Awkward and grinning, Jim tells Lucy that Henry will not be home until the next day, for he has married the comely Widow Brooks

LOCALE AND PERIOD: Anywhere in the country. The present

SETS: 1 - The plainly furnished dining room of the Miles farmhouse

COSTUMES: Gingham housedresses for Lucy and Lizzie; black silk dress for Widow Brooks; white linen suit for Henry; business suits for Tom and Jim

AGE OF GROUP: Adult

SOURCE: The Dramatic Publishing Company
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ONE FINE DAY
by
Louise Sublette Perry

CLASS: Tragedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 4
Male: 1 Female: 3

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This tragedy of the hill people of the South is splendid for advanced amateurs or semi-professional groups. The characters are true and sympathetically drawn and afford an excellent opportunity for skilful acting

SYNOPSIS:

As she churns beneath the old willow tree, pretty sixteen-year-old MARIE WHITE sings "One Fine Day", with her thoughts on the story of "Madame Butterfly" which the new teacher had told in the classroom. GRANDMA PATTON chides Marie goodnaturedly about her slowness and hopes the butter will be ready for their midday meal. MELISSA, Marie's too-early-old Mother, brings beans she is stringing for dinner and sits beside her daughter. She questions Marie about her song and Marie tells her the story of "Madame Butterfly". Melissa goes into the house and returns with a kimono, a fan and post cards from Japan. She explains that they were gifts from an old beau, Henry Brown, who had joined the Navy because he wanted to see the world before he married. He wrote infrequently from various parts of the world and when his letters finally ceased, Melissa had married Marie's father. Melissa had written Henry of her marriage and later of her husband's death. He had replied with a letter saying that someday he would surprise her and come home. Marie is interested and curious about Henry and Melissa admits that he is coming soon. Marie tries to persuade her mother to dress up for him but Melissa refuses and returns to her tasks in the house. Marie puts on the gay kimono and holding the fan daintily she sings softly. Looking up she sees a tall bronzed stranger, whom she knows is HENRY. Forgetting that much time has passed, Henry mistakes Marie for Melissa. Marie explains that she is Melissa's daughter. Hearing their voices Melissa comes out and Marie leaves them together. The contrast between Marie's fresh youth and Melissa's faded beauty quickly destroys Henry's romantic memories. Melissa understands that Henry is not old and that she is. Marie's song, "One Fine Day", comes to them through the open window. Melissa knows that Henry is attracted to Marie; gently she warns him to not stay away too long if he wants to marry her, for girls in the South marry and age early

LOCALE AND PERIOD: A mountain district near Ashville, South Carolina.
The present

SETS: 1 - Before a crude log cabin; clean and tidy with "old-fashioned" flowers growing near the door

COSTUMES: Faded dark calico with apron for Grandma Patten; faded light calico for Melissa; simple print frock, low heeled slippers and Japanese kimono for Marie; business suit for Henry

AGE OF GROUP: Adult

SOURCE: Row, Peterson and Company
Evanston, Illinois
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SWAMP SPIRIT
by
Lealon Norvel Jones

CLASS: Tragedy

NO OF CHARACTERS: 6
Male: 4 Female: 2

PLAY LENGTH:
1 act - 30 minutes

This is a grim, powerful tragedy for advanced amateurs and semi-professional groups. The play is well-written and the characters offer splendid opportunities for dramatic training

SYNOPSIS:

NATHAN HANKS, blind for many years, eagerly counts the notches on the calendar stick to confirm the date of the arrival of his son David from the university in Saint Louis where David has been a student for five years. MARTHA, Nathan's aged mother, dreads David's home-coming; on his last visit he had done little to help with the heavy farm tasks, his arrogance had offended their neighbors and he had flouted and insulted Old Kate, whose witching they greatly feared. CHLOE, the young Spanish-Indian girl whom Nathan and Martha had adopted when she was a homeless baby, warns them that the Big Cypress, the Wind and the Swamp Spirit have told her that someone would die that night. Nathan and Martha are frightened, for they do not doubt the strange girl whose mysterious charm had won the friendship of the animals and the spirits of the forest and swamp. DAVID arrives in a bad temper because part of his luggage has been lost. He loses no time in informing his father that he has no intention of working on the farm; he plans to clear the forest to attract the settlers who are already traveling westward. David orders Chloe to unpack his bags and threatens a whipping when she does not obey. Nathan cautions David to do no harm to Chloe as the Swamp Spirit will avenge her. Martha shrieks in fear as she sees the ghastly face of the SWAMP SPIRIT at the window. Chloe tries to open the door to answer the flute-like call of her friend, the Swamp Spirit. David bars her way and sees the axe over the door, which Martha nailed there to keep away evil spirits. Sobbing bitterly Chloe warns David of the fate that awaits him if he destroys the forest and swamp. David curses their superstitions and wrathfully removes the axe; drawing his pistol he opens the door and laughing mirthlessly invites all witches and spirits to enter. The black-robed Swamp Spirit comes in the door and is unharmed by the bullet David fires at him. Nathan and Martha crouch on the floor in terror as the Swamp Spirit grasps David by the throat and breathes into his face. David reels drunkenly; staggering, he follows the Swamp Spirit out into the dark night. As they disappear Chloe hears the Big Grey Wolf howling loudly as he always does when someone is to die

LOCALE AND PERIOD: The Mississippi Valley. Early in the 1800's

SETS: 1 - The primitive kitchen of early settlers

COSTUMES: Rough homespun of the period for Nathan, Martha, Luke and Chloe;
Colonial costume for David

AGE OF GROUP: Adult or adolescent

SOURCE: Row, Peterson and Company
Evanston, Illinois
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